



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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For More Information, Contact:
Molly Sander
Division of Disease Control
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.2378
E-mail: msander@nd.gov

Providers May Begin Offering H1N1 Vaccine to Everyone This Week If Supply Allows *Department of Health Continues To Encourage Those In High-Risk Groups To Get Vaccinated Now*

BISMARCK, N.D. – This week, local public health units and private providers who have adequate H1N1 vaccine supplies may begin vaccinating anyone who wants the vaccine, according to Molly Sander, Immunization Program manager for the North Dakota Department of Health.

“Local public health units and private providers have been busy vaccinating people in the high-risk target groups for about two months now,” Sander said. “The good news is that providers in some areas of the state are ready to offer the H1N1 vaccine to anyone who wants one, which will give healthy adults and everyone 65 and older the chance to be vaccinated. If you are in one of the priority groups and have not been vaccinated yet, we still urge you to get vaccinated as soon as possible.”

The ACIP priority groups include (in no particular order):

- Pregnant women.
- Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 months.
- Health-care and emergency services personnel.
- All people ages 6 months through 24 years.
- People ages 25 through 64 who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza.

“We also want to remind people that vaccine availability still varies in different parts of the state,” Sander said. “In some areas, the health units and private providers may have to continue vaccinating only the priority groups for a while because of higher demand in the priority groups and a limited supply of vaccine.”

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600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200
Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: health@nd.gov

Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

The Department of Health reminds parents that children age 6 months through 9 years need two doses of H1N1 vaccine separated by at least four weeks. That means many children who were vaccinated in October and early November are ready for their second dose.

The number of influenza cases reported to the Department of Health has slowed but continues to rise each week, with the total now reported at 3,172. Health officials say people should still get vaccinated against H1N1 even if they've been sick with flu-like symptoms in the past couple of months. Specific testing by the state laboratory is needed to confirm that a person actually has the novel H1N1 virus. Since most people will not be tested, the majority will not know whether they actually had H1N1 or some other virus.

The North Dakota Department of Health has activated a toll-free public health hotline for people to call if they have questions about influenza. (The hotline cannot provide medical advice to callers. For that information, people should call their physicians.) The number to call is 1.866.207.2880. The hotline is available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Central Standard Time. Information about influenza also is available on the Department of Health's influenza website at www.ndflu.com.

For more information, the media can contact Molly Sander at 701.328.2378.

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